



The ABA has proposed to make a number of new broadcasting licences available in the southern part of of Western Australia.

# New television and radio licences for Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin proposed by ABA

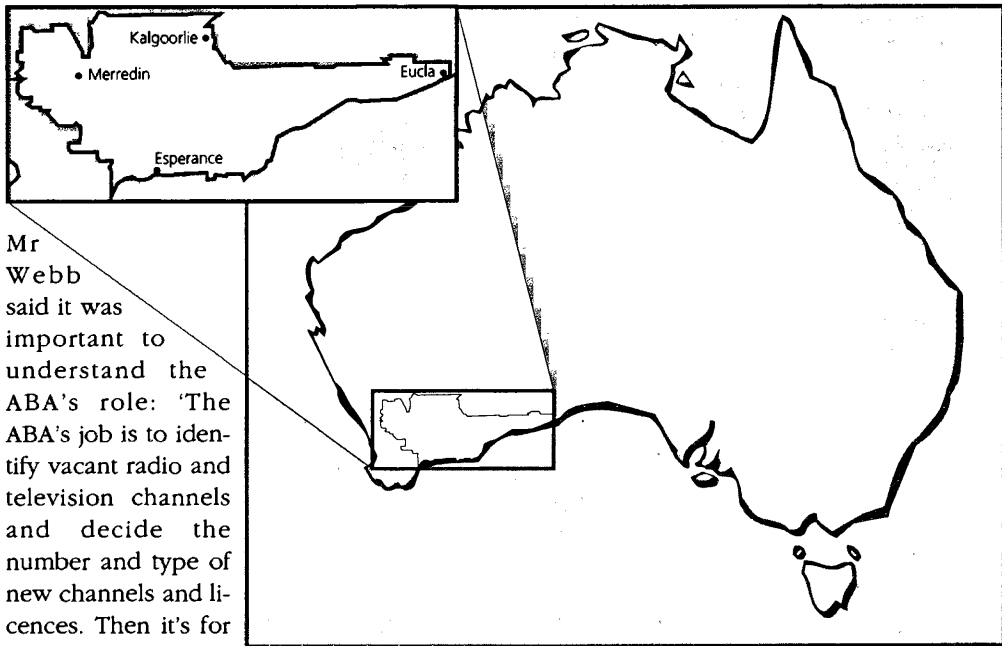
**T**he ABA proposes to make a new commercial television licence available for allocation in the Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin region of Western Australia.

The ABA proposes to make two new commercial radio licences available for allocation in each of the Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin radio markets.

Seven new community radio licences would also be made available for allocation at Lake Grace, Ravensthorpe, Esperance, Norseman, Kalgoorlie, Mukinbudin and Merredin.

The ABA's preliminary views are contained in its public planning proposals for radio and television in the Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin regions, released today.

'The proposals will now undergo public comment and if confirmed will lay the groundwork for new television and radio services for the people of Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin,' said Mr Peter Webb, ABA Acting Chairman. 'This is part of a national planning process which will result in detailed blueprints for radio and television services Australia-wide. Planning television and radio services in the Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin region has a high priority as there is only one commercial radio service in each radio market and one commercial television service in the area.'



Mr Webb said it was important to understand the ABA's role: 'The ABA's job is to identify vacant radio and television channels and decide the number and type of new channels and licences. Then it's for business and the community to take up these opportunities. We cannot fund or make others fund extra services. We can't demand improved reception for existing services'.

The release of the planning proposals follows extensive public consultation including public meetings in Esperance and Kalgoorlie in February 1994. A call for written comment resulted in many submissions, which the ABA has taken into account in preparing the draft plans.

Copies of the planning proposals for the region, comprising a discussion paper and draft licence area plans, are available from the ABA on freecall (008) 810 241.

### Licence area plans

The licence area plans for ra-

dio and television in the Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin region of Western Australia will contain details of national (ABC/SBS), commercial and community radio and television broadcasting services that are to be available using the broadcasting services bands of the radiofrequency spectrum. These are the parts of the spectrum used by AM and FM radio and VHF and UHF television.

The ABA may make any vacant channels available for commercial, community or national radio and television broadcasting services.

Commercial radio and television broadcasting licences shown as available in the respective licence area plans will generally be offered for sale via a price-based allocation

process currently being developed by the ABA.

The existing high power commercial television service in the Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin region (VEW Kalgoorlie) uses channels on the VHF band (which covers channels 0 to 11). Any new commercial service will be allocated channels in the UHF band (channels 28 to 69). The ABC television service from Kambalda (ABKW) has been simulcasting on VHF channel 5 and UHF channel 55 for at least 12 months.

### Main issues

The main planning issue disclosed by the ABA's public planning process is whether additional commercial radio and television licences and community radio licences



should be made available in the Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin region, and if so, how many.

The ABA believes the objects of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* would be best served by making two additional commercial radio licences available in the Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin radio markets, and one additional commercial television licence available in the Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin television market.

These objects talk of the promotion of a diverse range of radio and television services offering entertainment, education and information (s.3(a)) and the encouragement of providers of commercial and community broadcasting services to be responsive to the need for a fair and accurate coverage of matters of public interest and for an appropriate coverage of matters of local significance (s.3(g)).

The ABA proposes to make FM radio channels available for re-transmission of the proposed commercial radio services throughout the Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin region.

Channels for the proposed Esperance based services will be made available at Condingup/Howick, Eucla, Hopetoun, Lake Grace, Lake King, Munglinup, Newdegate, Ravensthorpe and Salmon Gums. Channels for the Kalgoorlie based services will be made available at Higginsville, Kambalda, Menzies and Norseman. Channels for the Merredin based services will be made available at Beacon, Hyden, Kondinin, Naremben and Southern Cross.

If there are at least two additional commercial radio licences available for allocation in a market, an existing radio operator who is the sole provider

of a commercial service in that market may apply for one of those licences, under the provisions of s.39 of the Act.

There is only one commercial radio operator in each commercial radio market at Esperance (6SE), Kalgoorlie (6KG) and Merredin (6MD). These three existing operators have all requested the ABA to allocate another commercial radio broadcasting licence to them under s.39.

Although a similar provision exists in s.73 of the Act in relation to the allocation of additional commercial television licences in solus television markets, no expression of interest in providing such a service has been received from the existing television broadcaster, Golden West Network (VEW).

However, the ABA did receive a submission from the Queensland regional television broadcaster, Sunshine Television Network Limited, expressing interest in providing additional commercial television broadcasting services to Esperance, Kalgoorlie and Merredin.

In response to the many submissions expressing interest in community radio licences and considering the availability of the radiofrequency spectrum, the ABA will make channels available for local coverage community radio services in Lake Grace, Ravensthorpe, Esperance, Norseman, Kalgoorlie, Mukinbudin and Merredin.

The ABA has planned television channels for SBS services and for another national/community television service throughout the Kalgoorlie, Esperance and Merredin market at Esperance, Kalgoorlie, Merredin, Baandee, Condingup/Howick, Kambalda, Koolyanobbing and Southern Cross. New television services will be on the UHF band. Viewers may need to purchase a

UHF antenna to receive these services.

The ABA is seeking comments on whether the VEW commercial television service transmitting from Kambalda should remain on channel 3 and whether the ABC television service from Kambalda (ABKW) should remain on channel 5. Both channel 3 and 5 occupy part of the radiofrequency spectrum normally used by FM radio.

The ABC television service from Kambalda is already simulcasting on UHF channel 55. If the ABC ceases transmitting on channel 5 or VEW moves from channel 3 to channel 58 in the UHF band, more channels will be available for FM radio services in Kalgoorlie, Kambalda and Higginsville. The ABA's preferred option is for the ABC service to cease transmitting on channel 5.

The ABA proposes to make a number of FM radio channels available in the region for open narrowcasting services for a period of five years. There will be two channels in Esperance, two in Kalgoorlie and one in Merredin.

#### Other issues

The ABA proposes to redefine the existing Esperance commercial radio licence area, the Merredin commercial radio licence area and the VEW commercial television licence area using 1991 census descriptions rather than the present 1986 descriptions, but to otherwise leave the licence areas unchanged. The licence areas for the proposed new commercial radio and television services will be identical to that for the existing respective commercial broadcasting services.

#### The planning process

The release of draft licence area plans (LAPs) begins stage three of the planning process.

The first stage was completed in September 1993 with the release of the ABA's priorities for planning services across Australia. Stage two is also complete with the publication of the frequency allotment plan in August 1994, setting out the number of radio and television channels in particular areas of Australia. With priorities set and the frequency allotment plan in place, the ABA can now complete this third and final stage of the planning process, over the next two years.

Over the coming months public planning proposals containing draft LAPs will be circulated for public comment then released in final form. Public consultation for the first round of planning in remote Australia and other high priority areas has been completed.

#### Allocation of broadcasting services bands licences

With the exception of the capacity reserved for national and community broadcasters, other capacity set out in the LAP will generally be available for commercial licences, under a price-based allocation scheme. Capacity set out for community licences will be made available by means of a merit-based system. The ABA will commence the allocation process after a final LAP for each area has been determined.

Subject to consultation with the Spectrum Management Agency, allocation of spectrum for narrowcasting services would be by way of a price-based allocation system.

Channels not immediately required for broadcasting services may be allocated for other purposes (such as open narrowcasting) for a fixed period determined by the ABA. At the end of that period the spectrum will once again become available for mainstream broadcasting. □